Mr. Speaker, I believe the American people would rather secure the Social Security surplus than see government officials spend the money, lubricating their skin on the beaches of the Virgin Islands.

U.S. SHOULD PAY U.N. ARREARS

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, last March, seven former Secretaries of State from both parties, Republican and Democrat, wrote to Congress and told us that it was time for us to pay our debt to the United Nations. With time winding down before we adjourn, we still have not followed their good advice.

For decades, the U.N. has played a key role in American international affairs and national security. But now by failing to pay our bill, we have strained our relationship with some of our closest allies. Our influence in the world and at the U.N. is being undermined and our ability to bring about critical U.N. reforms is being weakened as well.

If we fail to pay by the end of the year, the U.S. will loose its vote in the U.N. General Assembly under the very rules that we helped to adopt. Our international obligations should not be held up by disputes over unrelated issues between the House and the President. Keeping our promises should be a priority and not a bargaining chip.

Other countries look to our great Nation for leadership to set an example for the rest of the world. They should not look to us and see a nation that will not pay its bills because of unrelated issues.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3073, FATHERS COUNT ACT OF 1999

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, by the direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 367 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 367

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3073) to amend part A of title IV of the Social Security Act to provide for grants for projects designed to promote responsible fatherhood, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed 90 minutes, with 60 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means and 30 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. In lieu of the amendment recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means now printed in the bill, it shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the Congressional Record and numbered 1 pursuant to clause 8 of rule XVIII, modified by the amendment printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. That amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against that amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived. No amendment to that amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules. Each amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against the amendments printed in the report are waived. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the amendment in the nature of a substitute made in order as original text. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with our without instructions.

□ 1045

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), my friend, pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 367 is a structured rule providing for the consideration of H.R. 3073, the Fathers Count Act of 1999.

The rule provides for 90 minutes of general debate. One hour will be managed by the chairman and ranking member of the Committee on Ways and Means, and 30 minutes will be managed by the Committee on Education and the Workforce. Both of these committees have jurisdiction over portions of the bill and the compilation of their work is embodied in a substitute amendment which will be made in order as base text for the purpose of further amendment.

The rule designates which amendments may be offered which are printed in the Committee on Rules report. Out of the nine amendments filed with the Committee on Rules, six are made in order under the rule and five of those six are Democrat amendments.

In addition to giving my Democratic colleagues five out of six amendments, the rule offers the minority a motion to recommit with or without instructions. So I think it is accurate to say that this bill treats the minority very fairly, especially considering that both committees of jurisdiction reported their versions of the bill by voice vote, suggesting very little controversy.

Mr. Speaker, the Fathers Count Act builds on the welfare reforms that Congress successfully enacted in 1996. Those reforms were based on the principles of personal responsibility, accountability, as well as the value of work. And with this foundation, welfare reform has been a great success. Since 1996, we have seen our welfare rolls shrink by 40 percent. We now have the lowest number of families on welfare since 1970.

But our work is far from done. There are still families struggling to make ends meet and many of them are single-parent households and more often than not, the lone struggling parent is the mother.

For those of us who have raised children with the help and support of a spouse, it is hard to fathom the energy, patience, and stamina required to face such a task alone. And for those of us who were fortunate enough to be raised by two parents, it is hard to imagine the void of a fatherless youth or how our personalities and life experience would have been altered had our fathers not been there to guide us.

But as we know, this is the reality for many low-income American families that have their financial challenges compounded by the absence of a father and a husband. The fact is that kids in two-parent homes are generally better off than those raised in single-parent homes. Kids who have only one parent to rely on have a harder time in school, a lower rate of graduation, a greater propensity toward crime, an increased likelihood of becoming a single parent themselves, and a higher chance of ending up on welfare.

The Fathers Count Act recognizes these hardships as well as the significant role that fathers play in family life. The bill seeks to build stronger families and better men by promoting marriage and encouraging the payment of child support and boosting fathers' income so that they can better provide for their children.

Specifically, the Fathers Count Act provides $140 million for demonstration

projects that are designed to promote marriage, encourage good parenting, and increase employment for fathers of poor children.

Congress and the President will appoint two 10-member review panels who will determine which programs receive Federal funds. Preference will be given to those programs that encourage the payment of child support, work with State and local welfare and child support agencies, and have a clear plan for recruiting fathers. The number of programs selected and the amount of funding they receive is not dictated by the bill. Members of the selection panels will have the flexibility to make these decisions based on the quality and number of programs that apply.

The bill also encourages local efforts to help fathers by requiring that 75 percent of the funding be given to nongovernmental community-based organizations.

The Fathers Count Act also seeks a balance in terms of the size of programs and their geographic locations. The fact is that we are not sure what the best way is to get fathers back into the picture and engage in their children's upbringing, but we think some community-based organizations might have some good ideas and would meet the unique needs of the fathers in their own cities and towns.

The Fathers Count Act is designed to try to tap into these communities, try some new things, and then scientifically evaluate the results so that good programs can be duplicated.

Despite its name, the Fathers Count Act is not just about fathers. It also improves our welfare system by expanding eligibility for welfare-to-work programs. The program was designed to help the hardest-to-employ, long-term welfare recipients. But in an attempt to ensure that the most needy individuals are served by the program, Congress made the criteria a bit too stringent and the States are not able to find enough eligible people to fulfill the program's purpose. So this bill adds some needed flexibility to the program by requiring recipients to meet one of seven defined characteristics rather than two out of three. As a result, we should see many more families move successfully from welfare dependency to self-sufficiency.

Further, the bill gives relief to States who are making a good-faith effort to meet Federal child support enforcement requirements, but which are facing devastating penalties for missing an October 1 deadline.

These penalties were established with the thought that if States missed the deadline by which they were to have a child support State distribution unit set up and running, they would be doing so in willful disobedience of Federal law. In fact, there are eight States that have been working very hard to comply, but have hit some bumps in the road which have slowed them down a bit.

The alternative penalties provided in this bill provide incentives and encouragement to meet child support enforcement goals without crippling these States' welfare systems in the process.

Finally, I am pleased that the Fathers Count Act includes important funding for the training of court personnel who are at the center of our child protection system.

As we implement new laws that seek to move more children out of the foster care system into safe, loving and permanent homes, we must ensure that our courts have the resources necessary to make the very best decisions for our children.

Mr. Speaker, all said, the Fathers Count Act takes a number of important steps forward in our Nation's efforts to redefine welfare and make it work for families. But most importantly, this legislation values responsible parenting, in this case, fatherhood, by giving the support and encouragement for fathers to be there for their children, physically, emotionally, and financially.

I hope my colleagues will support this rule, participate in today's debate, and take another step forward in making our welfare system work for all families.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a ''yes'' vote on the rule and the Fathers Count Act.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE), my dear friend and colleague, for yielding me this time; and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the rule governing the debate of H.R. 3073, the Fathers Count Act, makes in order a number of amendments which greatly improve the underlying bill. This rule should have been an open rule. The legislation should be fully debated without unnecessary restrictions. We were unable to achieve that, but a number of important amendments are made in order.

Mr. Speaker, let us all agree that fathers count. Fathers have a major impact on every child's life either through their presence or by their absence.

We can go through the voluminous research or rely on our common sense to understand the important role that fathers play in the lives of the children whom they helped to bring into the world. But fathers must also stand up and be counted. Sadly, in our Nation, the majority of single-parent families with minor children are maintained by the mothers of those children. Too often, single mothers must struggle to balance the demands of a household, raising children, and holding a job. If they are not receiving child support payments from the fathers of their children, this task can be all but impossible.

In my own home district of Monroe County, New York, alone, only $35 million of the $46 million due to local children was collected, meaning that one quarter of the child support went unpaid.

Mr. Speaker, it has taken heroic efforts just to get where we are today regarding the public perception of child support payments. We have made great strides in educating people that they are not casual obligations.

In seeking to promote marriage, I am concerned about whether or not this bill may have an unintended effect of trying to keep together some unions which should, in fact, be separated, specifically, those with an abusive, physically violent spouse. When as many as one-fourth of the women on public assistance are living with violence in their lives, let the us not try to force them to remain in a violent marriage.

Promoting and encouraging fatherhood is a laudable goal. We need to focus on men and their roles as fathers. But that cannot happen independent of the women who are their partners and who quite clearly have a very important part in creating children and the family which results.

There will be an amendment offered which will help clarify this point and which emphasizes the notion that parents count. This amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK), also puts proper emphasis on providing resources to organizations dealing with domestic violence prevention and intervention.

Finally, the rule does allow for an amendment by our colleague who is perhaps the most consistent and thoughtful voice on the separation of church and State, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS). The separation of church and State is a brilliant and practical gift of our Founding Fathers. It is expressly intended to help preserve our religious freedoms, not to threaten them. And this notion serves as a firewall from government regulations of religious practice.

Thus, even when it might be more convenient or expeditious to bridge this separation, it must be vigilantly maintained. I strongly encourage Members to consider the Edwards amendment. It will help us to maintain the tradition which has served this country well by clarifying the eligibility of faith-based organizations to participate in the programs provided under this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this bill was cleared by the Committee on Ways and Means on a voice vote and sped down a fast track to consideration here on the House Floor, but a hasty process sometimes needs to be slowed down so that we can more fully consider how to best make fathers count and how to make fathers accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I do not have any requests for time, so I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas.

Mr. Speaker, before I comment on the underlying bill, let me add my appreciation, gratitude and congratulations to Chaplain Ford in support of the resolution honoring him, for he has given this Nation and this Congress a great, great and wonderful service.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the rule and to support the underlying bill as well. I am very gratified that the Committee on Rules saw fit to acknowledge a number of the amendments that I think will enhance this legislation. But I think it is important to start my support debate on this bill with a referral to a 13-year-old in Pontiac, Michigan, by the name of Nathaniel Abraham. Nathaniel Abraham came from a family that I am sure wanted the best for him. Nathaniel Abraham is a 13-year-old who has been certified as an adult for murder.

His mother, as the newspapers report, is a hard-working single parent with a number of other children who loved all of her children and cared for them, but Nathaniel's father was not in the home. When interviewed on 60 Minutes about what he thought about that, his response was first, yes, he was unhappy and hurt, but that he was angry.

I think the statistical analysis will point to the fact that children who have fathers who are absent from their lives and their homes turn out to be dysfunctional adults or youth. It is important to have a bill that emphasizes fathers, but emphasizes parents and emphasizes families.

Recent studies show that 59 percent of teenage children born in poor families are raised by a single parent with little or no involvement of fathers, and 90 percent of teenagers who have children are unmarried, and 28 percent of all families are headed by a single parent.

Mr. Speaker, I am very delighted that this legislation will liberalize welfare-to-work provisions which will allow monies to be given in a more liberalized manner, and that it will also provide monies for children or young people who are coming off foster care, an area of interest that I have had for a number of years. I am as well pleased that there will be a focus on low-income fathers through marriage and job counseling, mentoring, and family planning, but that mothers similarly situated will not be left out.

□ 1100

I think it is vital to understand that we do have a responsibility to liberalize or loosen the regulations to ensure that we put our money where our mouth is. For a very long time Members of this body have argued about the devastation of families who have been divided, of fathers who are incarcerated, or fathers who are unable to take on their responsibility as a parent. We have cited the devastation that comes sometimes from a single parent who may happen to be a mother.

In this instance, this legislation responds to that concern, and as it responds to that concern it promotes family, it promotes the unity of family, and it enhances fathers who may not have had the right kind of training to be a father. How tragic it is in all of our communities to come upon households who are absolutely trying, Mr. Speaker, but they do not have the support system.

I am likewise appreciative that we will have an opportunity to debate the amendment of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), because all of us believe that there should be the spiritual aspect in our families' lives, but we do want to ensure that there is no proselytizing, there is no promoting of religion in the course of trying to help these single parents, mothers and fathers.

Mr. Speaker, I support the rule, I support the legislation, and I would hope many of these amendments will pass as well.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this rule because I believe it should be an open rule. It fails to make in order an important amendment that I offered, which was supported by the Democrats on the Committee on Rules and all of the Democrats on the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

My amendment increases the time that a person is allowed to receive vocational education or job training while participating in a welfare-to-work program from 6 months to 12 months. Six months of vocational education or job training is just not enough to prepare an individual for a job that will pay wages leading to self-sufficiency.

I know that 6 months is not enough because studies that compare women's education to their earnings prove it. I know that 6 months is not enough because I have testimonials from training programs nationwide, the people in the field who work with welfare recipients day in and day out, and they all agree that more education is needed to make families self-sufficient. And I know that 6 months is not enough because there was a time when I was a young mother raising three small children without any help from their father. Even though I worked full time, I depended on welfare to supplement my paycheck to give my children the food, the child care, and the health care that they needed.

Eventually, I was able to leave welfare and never go back. I was able to leave welfare because I was healthy, I was assertive, and I was educated and had good job skills. That education was my ticket off of welfare into a better job, into better pay, and into benefits that my family needed. It gave me the means to support myself and my family and, believe me, it cannot be done without education or training.

My amendment would have given other families the same fair chance I had to move from welfare to work, a chance to earn a livable wage. Remember, my colleagues, we should not be giving opportunity only to those who have opportunity to begin with.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this rule until all individuals are given the opportunity to earn a livable wage.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN).

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York and the gentlewoman from Ohio for bringing forward this rule that I support.

In response to the comments of the gentlewoman from California about job training, I agree with her. I am sorry that was not made in order. But without this rule, without bringing this bill forward, we are going to be with current law that does not allow any opportunity for independent job training. The bill provides for a new 6-month period, and I would hope that we would have her support so we could move this important bill forward.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to compliment the Committee on Rules for allowing us to debate this issue fully today. I want to thank my colleague, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means, for the bipartisan way in which the Fathers Count Act of 1999 has been brought forward.

And let me just also, if I might, read from the statement of the administration's policy that we received today: ''The administration supports House passage of H.R. 3073. The President is deeply committed to helping parents of low-income children work and honor their responsibilities to support their children. H.R. 3073 is an important step in this direction.''

And we received last week a letter from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Center for Law and Social Policy, and the Children's Defense Fund, writing in support of H.R. 3073, the Fathers Count Act of 1999. The letter goes on to point out how important this is to help low-income custodial and noncustodial parents facilitate the payment of child support; and it assists parents in meeting their parental responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill, and I would encourage my colleagues to support the rule and to support the legislation.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 8 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and as the father of two small boys, I would hardly stand in the well of this House and oppose the concept of encouraging fathers to be part of their family and to take responsibility for their children. But I rise today because I want to bring to Members' attention what I think are two fundamental flaws in this bill unless we pass the Edwards amendment in debate today.

The first is, without my amendment, this bill would allow direct Federal tax dollars to go directly into churches, synagogues, and houses of worship. Clearly, in my opinion, and more importantly the opinion of Justice Rehnquist in the 1988 decision, something that is unconstitutional.

Secondly, without the Edwards amendment, under this measure, because it adopts language that was originally put into the welfare reform bill that not a handful of Members of this House were aware of when that bill passed, and listen to me, Members, on this, this bill, without my amendment, would allow a church to take Federal tax dollars and put up a sign saying, if you are not of a particular religion, we will not hire you because of your religious faith. Signs in one church using Federal dollars may say, no Jews need apply here, and another church say, no Christians or no Protestants need apply here. I find that offensive and I would hope every Member of this House would join me in support of changing that fatal flaw in this legislation.

Since the Committee on Rules was gracious enough to give me my amendment, I will have a chance to debate it further. Unfortunately, I will only have 10 minutes to debate the issue of separation of church and State that our Founding Fathers spent 10 years debating. So let me discuss my amendment now.

My amendment is straightforward and direct. It says that Federal funding of this bill can go to faith-based organizations but not directly to churches, synagogues, and houses of worship. My amendment will be a short amendment and it will be a short debate. But, Members, the principle of opposing direct Federal funding of churches, synagogues, and houses of worship is as timeless and as profound as the first 10 words of our Bill of Rights. Those words are these: ''Congress shall pass no law respecting an establishment of religion.''

Those words have protected for over 200 years American religion from government intervention and regulation. In a 20-minute debate today on this floor when our attention is focused on appropriations bills, let us not carelessly throw away the religious freedom and tolerance our Founding Fathers so carefully crafted in the establishment clause and the first words of the first amendment of our Bill of Rights.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, there is nothing wrong, given some basic safeguards, with faith-based organizations, such as the Salvation Army or Catholic Charities receiving Federal money to run social programs. However, if my colleagues would listen to the words of Madison and Jefferson, there is something terribly wrong about Federal tax dollars going directly to churches, synagogues, and houses of worship.

Our Founding Fathers, as I stated, debated at length the question of government-funding of churches. They not only said no, they felt so strongly about their answer that they dedicated the first words of the Bill of Rights to the proposition that government should stay out of religion and should not directly fund religion and houses of worship.

Our Founding Fathers did not build the establishment clause in the Bill of Rights out of disrespect for religion, they did it out of total reverence for religion. Why? Because our Founding Fathers understood the clear lesson of all of human history, that the best way to ruin religion is to politicize it. The best way to limit religious freedom is to let government regulate religion. Millions of foreign citizens have emigrated to America and even put their lives on the line to do so precisely because of the religious freedom we have here guaranteed under the establishment clause.

Why in the world would we in this Congress want to tear down a principle today that our Founding Fathers so extraordinarily fought for and that has worked, a principle that has worked so well for over 2 centuries? Why in the world would this Congress today want to emulate the failed policies of other nations who have direct Federal involvement in funding of their churches and of their religions and, as a consequence, have had religious fights, discord and, yes, even wars?

What is wrong with direct Federal funding of churches and synagogues and houses of worship? With less eloquence than Jefferson and Madison, let me mention four serious specific problems.

First, it is clearly unconstitutional. Chief Justice Rehnquist wrote in 1988, in the case of Bowen vs Kendrick, ''There is a risk that direct government funding, even if it is designated for specific secular purposes, may nonetheless advance the pervasively sectarian institution's religious mission.''

The second problem. This bill, if not amended, as I have said, would allow Federal dollars to be used, and listen to me, my colleagues, would allow Federal dollars to be used to discriminate against citizens in job hiring and firing based specifically and only on their religious faith. I find that repugnant.

One church, as I said, could put up a sign saying, Jews may not apply for jobs for this federally funded position. Another community, perhaps a church, that says, Protestants may not apply, or Catholics may not apply, Hindus may not apply, using Federal dollars. And that is wrong, my colleagues; and we ought to change it with the Edwards amendment.

The idea of government-funded religious discrimination, I hope, would find great offense in this House today. It is anathema to the most fundamental rights embedded in the very core of our constitution.

The third problem with this bill and its direct Federal funding of our churches, synagogues, and houses of worship should be obvious to all of us, but especially to my conservative Republican friends, direct Federal funding will lead to massive Federal regulations of our religious institutions. Does anybody question that?

If we dislike Federal agencies regulating our businesses and our schools, why in the world would we, through this and the welfare reform legislation language that it adopts, why would we want to invite the Federal Government to regulate our churches and our religious institutions on a daily basis?

The fourth problem with this bill, without my amendment, is that it will pit churches and synagogues against each other in the pursuit of millions and ultimately billions of Federal dollars. Just look at the dissension that it has caused this Congress, professional politicians fighting over the annual appropriation bill. Think what is going to happen when we have Baptists and Methodists and Jews and Muslims and Hindus and all of 2,000 religious sects in America all competing for the almighty Federal dollar?

This bill has many good provisions in it that I could support, but it has these two fatal flaws. I urge, on a bipartisan basis, my colleagues to vote for the Edwards amendment, allow funding of faith-based organizations with safeguards, but prohibit direct funding of churches, synagogues, and houses of worship. And let us say clearly today on the floor of this House with our vote on my amendment that we do not support using Federal dollars to discriminate against American citizens based solely on their religious beliefs.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to finally thank the Democratic sponsor of this bill, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), for his strong support of the Edwards amendment.

Mr. Speaker, following is the case summary I referred to previously:

BOWEN V. KENDRICK, 487 U.S. 589 (1988) (JUSTICE REHNQUIST WROTE THE MAJORITY OPINION IN WHICH JUSTICES WHITE, O'CONNOR, SCALIA AND KENNEDY JOINED)

Facts: Challenge to federal grant program that provides funding for services relating to

adolescent sexuality and pregnancy. Plaintiffs claimed that the federal program, the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA), was unconstitutional on its face and as applied.

Ruling: The Court held that the statute was not unconstitutional on its face. It also ruled, however, that a determination of whether any of the grants made pursuant to the statute violate the Establishment Clause required further proceedings in the district court. ''In particular, it will be open to [plaintiffs] on remand to show that AFLA aid is flowing to grantees that can be considered 'pervasively sectarian' religious institutions . . .''

Reasoning: Although the Court did not believe that the possibility that AFLA grants may go to religious institutions that could be considered 'pervasively sectarian' was sufficient to conclude that no grants whatsoever could be given under the statute to religious organizations, it left the district court free to consider whether certain grants were going to such groups and thereby improperly advancing religion. By contrast, Court made clear that religiously affiliates could receive tax funds for secular purposes.

''Of course, even when the challenged statute appears to be neutral on its face, we have always been careful to ensure that direct government aid to religiously affiliated institutions does not have the primary effect of advancing religion. One way in which direct government aid might have that effect is if the aid flows to institutions that are 'pervasively sectarian.' We stated in *Hunt* v. *McNair,* 413 U.S. 734 (1973) that: ''[a]id normally may be thought to have a primary effect of advancing religion when it flows to an institution in which religion is so pervasive that a substantial portion of its functions are subsumed in the religious mission.''

The reason for this is that there is a risk that direct government funding, even if it is designated for specific secular purposes, may nonetheless advance the pervasively sectarian institution's 'religious mission.' ''

Court also noted difference between pervasively sectarian and religiously affiliated entities when it stated that grant monitoring expected under statute did not amount to excessive entanglement, ''at least in the context of a statute authorizing grants to religiously affiliated organizations that are not necessarily 'pervasively sectarian.' ''

Note on Justices Kennedy and Scalia's separate concurrence: Justice Kennedy wrote separate concurrence, in which Justice Scalia joined, to emphasize that they did not believe the district court should focus on whether the recipient organizations were pervasively sectarian, but instead on the way in which the organization spent its grant. ''[T]he only purpose of further inquiring whether any particular grantee institution is pervasively sectarian is as a preliminary step to demonstrating that the funds are in fact being used to further religion.''

□ 1115

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER).

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this rule as well as H.R. 3073, the ''Fathers Count Act of 1999.''

This is pretty important legislation, fundamentally important legislation. We were successful in doing something 3 years ago in 1997 we were told we could not do when I came to Congress in 1994; and that is, we reformed our welfare system, a system that was failing so bad that more children were in poverty in 1993 and in 1994 than ever before in history.

One of the reasons that so many children were in poverty was because their fathers were not involved in the families. And when the father was not involved, the family's income was a lot less and the struggling, working mom trying to make ends meet and raise children was having a hard time.

We passed into law in 1997 the first major welfare reform in over a generation that emphasized work and family and responsibility. Clearly it is one of the great successes of this Congress, because we have seen a drop in the welfare rolls in my home State of Illinois of over 50 percent, meaning more families are now paying taxes and in the work rolls and successfully participating in society.

Well, this legislation, the ''Fathers Count Act of 1999,'' is the next logical step. Let us remember, the old welfare was biased against dad. The old welfare system discouraged dad from being involved in the family. In fact, it rewarded the family if dad stayed away. We have changed that successfully over the last several years.

This legislation is the next step. What is great about this legislation is that it reinforces marriage, the most important basic institution of our society, and it promotes better parenting, encourages and rewards the payment of child support.

More children are in poverty today in Illinois because of the lack of the payment of child support, and we want to turn that around. But, also, this increases the father's income and encourages and rewards fathers for being involved in family. It is good legislation.

I just listened to the argument of my friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), who believes that we should deny faith-based organizations the opportunity to be part of this program.

I think of Restoration Ministries in Harvey, Illinois, a program that successfully has worked over the last decade to identify men in the community, particularly in urban communities in the Southside of Chicago, and help give them the opportunity to participate in society. It has been a successful program. I think Restoration Ministries is one of those programs which works that we should enlist in our effort to involve fathers in this program.

The fact that 75 percent of the funds, under this program, will go to faith-based organizations, whether they are Jewish or Muslim or Christian or other faiths, is a right step because they care and they want to be involved.

Organizations like Restoration Ministries are successful because the people that are involved believe in their programs, they want to help people, they are part of the community. Let us enlist them.

I would also point out that this idea has bipartisan support. Not only do we have the leading Presidential candidate on the Republican side saying they support this, but the leading candidate on the Democratic side supporting this, as well.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding the time.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose the rule because the Committee on Rules ruled out of order an amendment that I offered which would ensure that the Civil Rights Act and civil rights laws would apply to the use of these Federal funds.

The Edwards amendment would address many concerns. This amendment would address one specific concern, and that is that the bill provides an exception to civil rights laws and specifically allows religious organizations to discriminate on hiring with Federal funds.

Now, many religious groups now sponsor Federal programs: Catholic Charities, Lutheran Services. But they cannot discriminate in hiring people with those Federal funds.

This bill changes that and says that a program funded under this bill, the sponsor can say that people of the Jewish faith need not apply for jobs funded by the Federal Government or Catholics only will be hired by the Federal funds. That is wrong.

The amendment should have been allowed, and it was not. Therefore, I oppose the rule.

Mrs. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER).

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, one of the more devastating amendments today that we will be debating is the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) that would strip out the opportunity to have religious and faith-based organizations participate in the fatherhood initiative and the fathers count program and the other initiatives that we have in front of us today.

We in the House have now passed this three times, in the Human Services bill, in the Welfare Reform bill, and in the Justice Department bills. It would seem only appropriate in this very critical area that we would allow the faith-based organizations to become involved.

We can get into all kind of legal technicalities here about whether we should have types of separate organizations and how it should be structured. But the plain fact of the matter is that at the grass roots level, in urban America and African American and Hispanic communities, the organizations that are by far the most effective are faith-based.

They do not run around looking for attorneys as to how to set it up. They

are actually trying to help kids in the street. They are trying to help get families reunited like Charles Ballard has in Cleveland. He did not ask about the structure. He went out and tried to go door to door with thousands of families over 15 years to get dads reunited with their families.

Eugene Rivers, in Boston, has put together a coalition in the streets of Boston, who, with all the other Government programs that have been wasting, in my opinion, for the large part millions of dollars, he and the other pastors and young people working with the churches of Boston have accomplished more to reduce youth violence than all the rhetoric about all the other programs in Boston.

But they do not even have health insurance for their employees, the volunteers in the streets and the people that are working for their churches there. They do not have adequate money with which to get people out doing the things that are working. Instead, we put it into a lot of the traditional programs because we are worried that somebody might actually say that character matters.

What Vice President GORE has said, which the Republican Party and our logical leading contender at this point, Governor Bush, has said, and as well as this House three times, is that faith-based organizations need to be included when we look at how to address these social problems.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to first point out two inaccurate and I assume unintentional statements made by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. Two of their speakers have misrepresented my amendment, saying that it would deny funding to all faith-based organizations.

Let me be clear what my amendment does or does not do so Members can know the facts and make their own decision on that amendment.

My amendment says that the Federal funds under this bill may go to faith-based organizations. And there are hundreds, if not thousands, of faith-based organizations out there. Catholic Charities, Lutheran Services of America, Jewish Federation, Salvation Army, Volunteers of America, Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Even 501(c)(3) organizations associated directly with the church would not be prohibited from receiving money under my amendment.

What my amendment simply does is deal with, as the previous speaker said, the legal technicality. I do want to point out, when we talk about legal technicality, we are talking about the first 10 words of the First Amendment of our Constitution, the first words that our Founding Fathers chose to put in the Bill of Rights, which said, ''Congress shall pass no law respecting an establishment of religion.''

The legal technicality that the gentleman kind of demeans in his comments refers also to Chief Justice Rehnquist's majority statement in writing the opinion in the 1988 case of Bowen v. Kendrick that direct Federal funding to pervasively sectarian organizations is unconstitutional.

So perhaps if they want to take the position that the Bill of Rights is the legal technicality, that the First Amendment of the Constitution is a legal technicality, and that Justice Rehnquist and the Supreme Court are simply a legal technicality, then perhaps they should go ahead and vote against the Edwards amendment.

But if they take seriously and deeply the commitment of our Nation for two centuries not to the have direct Federal funding of churches and houses of worship, I would suggest that they should vote for the Edwards amendment and, recognizing the fact of the actual language, that it will continue to allow Federal dollars to go to faith-based organizations.

I hope the gentleman might have a chance to review my amendment again so that he would make it clear that we do hot prohibit money from going to faith-based organizations. We do try to be constitutional and help this bill in its constitutionality in prohibiting money from going directly to churches.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield to the gentleman if he wants to explain why the Bill of Rights, the First Amendment, and Judge Rehnquist's decision in 1988 in the Supreme Court case are merely legal technicalities.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, it is a nice try to wrap himself in the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, the legal technicality that I was talking about is, in fact, what we have debated many times in this House floor related to fungibility of money, that, as I understand the amendment of the gentleman, he is saying that if a church has an entity that would work with this and, for example, in this case a fatherhood initiative had a separate entity but was not part of the church, the money could go to the entity but not the church, which then brings the States in to audits of the church as to how they move their funds around, that in fact some organizations such as Catholic Charities have done that for years and have been eligible.

What we have done in our past bills is said that if the money goes to the church itself, they still have to make a proposal to whatever government entity, say it is on juvenile crime, as we did in the Justice bill or others, and they have to make that and the government then audits that. But sometimes it does not work in the inner city and other places to have this money, just have this paper trail.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, let me point out that I would make the same argument the gentleman made as an argument to support the Edwards amendment and I appreciate his bringing it up.

Under their bill, when money goes directly to the church, the Federal Government, to provide accountability to the taxpayers, is going to have to audit every dime raised and spent by that church.

If we pass my amendment, the money goes to a separate organization affiliated with the church or religion. And, therefore, because it is separate, they do not give the Government the carte blanche to walk into every church and synagogue in America and audit their revenues and their expenditures.

I think, without this amendment, this bill, whether intended or not, is going to invite massive involvement of Federal regulation into our houses of worship.

And finally the point I would make, the gentleman has referenced these debates we have had on the floor of the House about so-called charitable choice. Let me point out to him, I think he may recall the last two times we have had that debate, one was at 12:30 in the morning that lasted for 10 minutes and the other one was at 1:00 in the morning that lasted for 10 minutes.

I would be willing to wager with the gentleman that there were not 15 Members out of 435 of this House that knew that the Welfare Reform bill of 1996 opened the door to possible unconstitutional direct funding of our churches.

So the fact that we did something that the courts are now looking at, and I think will declare as unconstitutional, in 1996 is hardly a rationale to say, based on those 1:00 a.m. debates with 5 minutes on the floor of the House, we ought to extend this unconstitutional direct funding of our religious houses of worship and just one more step with just, gosh, this is just another $150 million.

This is an issue our Founding Fathers debated at length, and it was so fundamental to them that they said neither convenience nor even good intentions should be a reason for breaking down the wall of separation between church and State. This is a fundamental principle.

I wish we could debate this issue all day. It deserves such a debate. But I would just argue with my colleagues, if they want to support this bill, if they actually want it to become law, they should support the Edwards amendment, because based on the clear decision of the Supreme Court in 1988 in Judge Rehnquist's decision, this bill will not be constitutional unless we pass the Edwards amendment.

The final thing I would point out, in response to what the gentleman was saying, is that if we separate out the

funding and have it go to religiously affiliated organizations, they do not have the protection under the Supreme Court decisions to discriminate based on religious faith.

So, without my amendment, what they are really doing is breaking new ground. I would like to ask the gentleman to respond, how can he defend the concept of taking his and my Federal dollars and our constituents' Federal dollars and hanging up a sign saying a Jew, a Christian, a Protestant, a Hindu or a Muslim should not apply for this Federally funded job because they do not participate in the right religion? How can the gentleman defend that principle?

□ 1130

Mr. SOUDER. As the gentleman presumably knows, you cannot do that if you receive Federal funds. What you are allowed to do under this is in your staffing, if you are a religious organization, you can discriminate because part of your faith-based organization is that. You also have alternative programs in any of these, and if there are not alternatives for individuals to the faith-based organizations, there are protections. That has been in all of our different bills. That has been the standard interpretation.

Remember, the final decision as far as who gets the grant money lies with the Federal agency, not with the church. This is not like a block grant or something we are driving straight to the churches. What you are saying is you do not trust HHS under a Democratic administration to protect these rights.

Mr. EDWARDS. Frankly, our Founding Fathers did not trust government to regulate churches and houses of worship. I think they had it absolutely right in the Bill of Rights. The gentleman has made my point. He needs to go back and look at the language in the actual Welfare Reform Act of 1996 that nobody knew about and this adopted that says, yes, there is an exemption that applies to that, and now to this bill if we pass it, that says, yes, you can hang out a sign saying, do not apply for this federally funded job if you are not of the right religious faith.

That is obnoxious to me, that is repugnant to me, and I think that is why this should be a bipartisan amendment. I would urge my Republican colleagues to support it.

Mr. SOUDER. The gentleman just shifted his argument. He just said you could not apply for a job. Earlier he told me you could not apply to the agency to be served. I want to point out to the listeners, he just switched his argument in the middle of his debate.

Mr. EDWARDS. I did not shift my argument. I will be happy to give the gentleman the printed statement that I read from a few minutes ago. What it says is this bill without the Edwards amendment will let you take Federal dollars and discriminate against someone in the hiring of a person based on his or her religion.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER).

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude this portion of the preliminary debate with a couple of comments. First off, it is patently ridiculous to suggest that after a year and a half of the welfare reform debate, after multiple versions of that bill here that Members of Congress did not understand what they were voting for in the welfare reform debate. Furthermore, while we unfortunately did deal with the charitable choice at several times in the evening during the debate, I would argue that Members of Congress fully understood, or at least most Members of Congress, at least on our side, understood what they were debating in the charitable choice as did those who were generally supportive of this legislation. I find it a little disconcerting for my colleague to suggest that Members of Congress did not know what they were voting on three different times.

Furthermore, I believe that this is such a fundamental principle, and we will debate this further, I am sure. I am not referring to illegal mingling of church and State. What we are talking about here is that whether it is an individual church or a church entity, being able to come and say, we want to work with juvenile delinquents, in this case with father questions, in other cases with homeless questions, we have to meet these criteria of serving this population. But in doing that, because we have seen that character matters, that, in fact, you do not have to, if you are a Catholic priest, take your collar off, you do not have to strip the crucifixes off your room. That part and parcel of the effect of faith-based organizations is their faith and character.

Lastly, as far as this question of bringing the State into the church, the fact is that if it is a church-based entity or a church, if you say it can only come from an entity, you bring the government by default into the church. If you say that it can be either, you only bring the government in if there is a question about the grant. Under either way we do this, under the Edwards amendment or the existing, if there is a question about the grant, of course the government comes in. It would be illegal use of funds.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the resolution.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 278, nays 144, not voting 11, as follows:

[Roll No. 582]

YEAS—278

Aderholt	Ehlers	Lewis (CA)
Allen	Ehrlich	Lewis (KY)
Archer	Emerson	Linder
Armey	Engel	Lipinski
Bachus	English	LoBiondo
Baird	Eshoo	Lucas (KY)
Baker	Etheridge	Lucas (OK)
Baldacci	Everett	Maloney (CT)
Ballenger	Ewing	Manzullo
Barcia	Fletcher	Mascara
Barr	Foley	McCarthy (NY)
Barrett (NE)	Forbes	McCollum
Bartlett	Ford	McCrery
Barton	Fossella	McHugh
Bass	Fowler	McInnis
Bateman	Franks (NJ)	McIntosh
Bereuter	Frelinghuysen	McIntyre
Berkley	Gallegly	McKeon
Berry	Ganske	Menendez
Biggert	Gekas	Metcalf
Bilbray	Gephardt	Mica
Bilirakis	Gibbons	Miller (FL)
Bishop	Gilchrest	Miller, Gary
Blagojevich	Gillmor	Moran (KS)
Bliley	Gilman	Moran (VA)
Blumenauer	Goode	Morella
Blunt	Goodlatte	Myrick
Boehner	Goodling	Napolitano
Bonilla	Goss	Nethercutt
Bono	Graham	Ney
Borski	Granger	Northup
Boswell	Green (WI)	Norwood
Brady (PA)	Greenwood	Nussle
Brady (TX)	Hall (OH)	Ortiz
Bryant	Hall (TX)	Ose
Burr	Hansen	Oxley
Burton	Hastings (WA)	Packard
Buyer	Hayes	Pascrell
Callahan	Hayworth	Pastor
Calvert	Hefley	Paul
Camp	Herger	Pease
Campbell	Hill (MT)	Peterson (MN)
Canady	Hilleary	Peterson (PA)
Cannon	Hobson	Petri
Cardin	Hoeffel	Phelps
Castle	Hoekstra	Pickering
Chabot	Holden	Pitts
Chambliss	Horn	Pombo
Chenoweth-Hage	Hostettler	Porter
Clement	Houghton	Portman
Coble	Hulshof	Price (NC)
Collins	Hunter	Pryce (OH)
Combest	Hutchinson	Quinn
Cook	Hyde	Radanovich
Cooksey	Isakson	Ramstad
Cox	Istook	Rangel
Cramer	Jenkins	Regula
Crane	John	Reyes
Cubin	Johnson (CT)	Reynolds
Cunningham	Johnson, Sam	Riley
Danner	Jones (NC)	Rivers
Davis (FL)	Kasich	Rodriguez
Davis (VA)	Kelly	Roemer
DeGette	King (NY)	Rogan
DeLauro	Kingston	Rogers
DeLay	Knollenberg	Rohrabacher
DeMint	Kolbe	Ros-Lehtinen
Diaz-Balart	Kucinich	Rothman
Doolittle	Kuykendall	Roukema
Doyle	LaHood	Royce
Dreier	Latham	Ryan (WI)
Duncan	Lazio	Ryun (KS)
Dunn	Leach	Sabo

Salmon	Souder	Turner
Sandlin	Spence	Upton
Sanford	Stearns	Vitter
Saxton	Stenholm	Walden
Schaffer	Stump	Walsh
Sensenbrenner	Sununu	Wamp
Sessions	Sweeney	Watkins
Shaw	Talent	Watts (OK)
Shays	Tancredo	Weldon (FL)
Sherman	Tanner	Weldon (PA)
Sherwood	Tauzin	Weller
Shimkus	Taylor (MS)	Whitfield
Shows	Taylor (NC)	Wicker
Shuster	Terry	Wilson
Simpson	Thomas	Wise
Sisisky	Thornberry	Wolf
Skeen	Thune	Wynn
Skelton	Tiahrt	Young (AK)
Smith (MI)	Toomey	Young (FL)
Smith (NJ)	Traficant	

NAYS—144

Abercrombie	Hilliard	Mollohan
Ackerman	Hinchey	Moore
Andrews	Hinojosa	Nadler
Baldwin	Holt	Neal
Barrett (WI)	Hooley	Oberstar
Becerra	Hoyer	Obey
Bentsen	Inslee	Olver
Berman	Jackson (IL)	Owens
Bonior	Jackson-Lee (TX)	Pallone
Boucher	Jefferson	Payne
Boyd	Johnson, E. B.	Pelosi
Brown (FL)	Jones (OH)	Pickett
Brown (OH)	Kanjorski	Pomeroy
Capps	Kaptur	Rahall
Capuano	Kennedy	Roybal-Allard
Carson	Kildee	Rush
Clay	Kilpatrick	Sanchez
Clayton	Kind (WI)	Sanders
Clyburn	Kleczka	Sawyer
Coburn	Klink	Schakowsky
Condit	LaFalce	Scott
Conyers	Lampson	Serrano
Costello	Lantos	Shadegg
Coyne	Largent	Slaughter
Crowley	Larson	Smith (WA)
Cummings	Lee	Snyder
Davis (IL)	Levin	Spratt
DeFazio	Lewis (GA)	Stabenow
Delahunt	Lofgren	Stark
Deutsch	Lowey	Strickland
Dickey	Luther	Stupak
Dicks	Maloney (NY)	Tauscher
Dingell	Markey	Thompson (CA)
Dixon	Martinez	Thompson (MS)
Doggett	McCarthy (MO)	Thurman
Dooley	McDermott	Udall (CO)
Edwards	McGovern	Udall (NM)
Evans	McKinney	Velazquez
Farr	McNulty	Vento
Fattah	Meehan	Visclosky
Filner	Meek (FL)	Waters
Frank (MA)	Meeks (NY)	Watt (NC)
Frost	Millender-McDonald	Waxman
Gejdenson	Miller, George	Weiner
Gonzalez	Minge	Wexler
Gordon	Mink	Weygand
Green (TX)	Moakley	Woolsey
Gutierrez		Wu
Hastings (FL)		

NOT VOTING—11

Boehlert	LaTourette	Smith (TX)
Deal	Matsui	Tierney
Gutknecht	Murtha	Towns
Hill (IN)	Scarborough	

□ 1154

Mr. SPRATT changed his vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. BONIOR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise for the purposes of inquiring of the majority leader the schedule for the remainder of the week.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for taking this time, if the gentleman would yield.

Mr. BONIOR. I yield.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, appropriators are working very hard to wrap up the final bills. It is obviously difficult to get a read on it and we are working very hard on that. I will try to inform the Members as we go along how that is going, but, Mr. Speaker, the likely scenario is that it is our hope that we may be able to finish this up today. That is something that is very delicate. We will try to take a read.

I know Members want to not work tomorrow, as it is a very important day for so many of us, with Veterans Day. We will be in pro forma tomorrow, irrespective of how this works out, whether we can finish tonight or the early hours of tomorrow morning; or if, in fact, things do not go well with the paperwork or the negotiations, we might otherwise have to come back Friday and complete our work. We will try to get Members notice regarding the extent to which we will either stay late tonight or hold over until Friday at such a time that would make it possible for Members to make some arrangements for them to travel for Veterans Day tomorrow.

The House will only be in pro forma tomorrow, in any event. If we find it necessary to go out for Veterans Day, we would expect to be back here noon on Friday to take up the final work, have the final votes and complete our work and complete the year on Friday.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, if I might, there obviously is a lot of concern over the schedule by Members, I think it is fair to say, on both sides of the aisle. We are being told indirectly that we may be here until 2 or 3 a.m. tonight and then be back, as you have just pointed out, if, in fact, we do not finish tonight, which does not seem remotely possible, given the problems that are still out there, that we would be back on Friday, and I gather possibly throughout the weekend if we do not finish on Friday.

One of my concerns is the fact that Members who need to travel a great distance to be with their constituents on a day that honors our men and women who fought and died for our country will not be able to make that schedule if we are restrained to your schedule. In addition to that, of course, Members have events scheduled throughout this weekend.

If we are not going to be at the point where we can finish this weekend, does it not make sense to let people continue to do their work and to come back early at the beginning of next week and try to resume this?

□ 1200

Mr. ARMEY. If the gentleman would yield further, and I do appreciate the point. Obviously, a great many of our Members appreciate the point just made by the gentleman from Michigan.

However, as the gentleman knows, when we are working through these final points of the negotiations and we finally get to an agreement, it is always, I think, prudent to have ourselves in a position that when everybody says, okay, this is it, I agree, that we can get as quickly from that point of agreement to the floor of the House of Representatives.

As things are left to lay over, we may find ourselves extending our work here, or having it extended on our behalf, beyond that time. What we are trying to do is to maintain the kind of options that will make it possible for all of our Members to seize that moment when everybody is in agreement, recognizing that these can be passing moments, but at that moment to seize that moment and move the work to the floor and get it completed. We believe it is prudent, and we believe in the larger interest of the Members necessary, to keep that option available to us and keep it at hand.

We will keep you as much informed. The critical concern the Member has, I would think right now, is if the gentleman is not going to have the vote on the final package between midnight and 4 a.m. tomorrow, let me know as early in this day as possible, and I will try to do that.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, is the gentleman from Texas telling us also that if we do in fact come back on Friday, that we should expect to work through the weekend?

Mr. ARMEY. It is my anticipation if we were to come back on Friday, we would be able to convene for votes around noon and probably complete that work Friday late afternoon or Friday evening, and complete our work for the year.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ARMEY. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, this matter is more than a matter of convenience to the Members. This is a matter of whether we, as elected leaders of our country, have the opportunity to honor the veterans of this Nation.

Airplanes leave this afternoon or this evening. We will not be in session tomorrow, as the gentleman from Texas said, but little good does it do us if there are no airplanes to take us to Missouri or Texas or California.

I would like very, very much to be with my neighbors, my friends, and deliver what few remarks I may have to those veterans who have given so much. I think it is a matter of priority